

## CLAIMS

What is claimed is:

1. A method for detecting DESC1 gene expression in a sample from a subject comprising the following steps:

providing a tissue sample from the subject;  
assaying for expression of DESC1 gene in said sample.

2. An isolated nucleic acid comprising a polynucleotide encoding a protein having at least 90% identity to the DESC1 protein shown in Figure 1A or B.

3. The isolated nucleic acid of claim 2 having wherein the polynucleotide encodes a mature form or a soluble form of the DESC1 protein.

4. A recombinant vector comprising the nucleic acid of claim 2.

5. A recombinant host comprising the recombinant vector of claim 4.

6. An isolated DESC1 protein comprising a sequence having at least 90% identity to the amino acid sequence in Figure 1A or 1B.

7. An antibody that binds specifically to the DESC1 protein.

8. The isolated DESC 1 protein of claim 6 comprising the amino acid sequence set forth in Figure 1A or 1B.

9. The isolated nucleic acid of claim 2 wherein the polynucleotide hybridizes under stringent conditions with the nucleotide sequence shown in Figure 1A or 1B.